

(DRAFT)

## Indiana Tourism Sign Commission

December 12, 2007

### Minutes

Amy Vaughan called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m.

Members present: Senator Glenn Howard, Meredith Easley, Jim Poturalski, Becky Weber, Peggy Hobson, Representative Saunders, Mike Huber

Guests present: Jo Wade, Sara Slavens, George Ethridge, Jeremy Yackle, Bill Robinson, Penn Jensen, Mark Webb, Dick Thompson, Larry Rust, Susan Haller, Stuart Lowry, Dave Branneman

Tourism Staff present: Brian Blackford, Emiley Matherly, Carrie Lambert, Jan Bledsoe

#### Welcome

Amy Vaughan reviewed commission member packet items:

- ✓ Survey – Over twenty people returned survey requested at the last meeting
- ✓ Comparison to other states – Request was made at the last meeting to compare our specifications and costs with surrounding states.
- ✓ Summary of work for this commission

Amy reviewed the summary of work which outlines the mandatory decision process as charged by the General Assembly. She reminded the group of several key items:

- Tourist-oriented directional signs are for directional purposes only. Commercial advertising in the right of way is prohibited by federal rule.
- A facility is eligible for tourist-oriented directional signs only if it derives the major portion of income or visitors during normal business season from road users not residing in the local area.
- Indiana MUTCD must conform to Federal MUTCD.
- Tourist Attraction Sign Policy is the focus of this discussion.
- Indiana sign program is a self-sustaining program. No tax dollars are contributed to this program.

#### Approval of minutes

Peggy motioned to approve the November 28 minutes. Jim Poturalski seconded and the motion carried.

#### State by State Comparison

Jim Poturalski reviewed the comparative information between Indiana and Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, and Illinois. The comparison looks at signage programs offered, qualifications for each program, application process, and costs of each. There is a side by side comparison and a summary sheet. (Will be posted online)

Becky Weber asked how Indiana mediates if there is no more room at an intersection. It is conceivable that we may run out of room at certain intersections.

The challenge will be how to comply with federal guidelines while at the same time make sure our signage is readable and allows for motorist safety.

Meredith Easley asked how much space is still available – Jim replied that the biggest potential is in the logo signage program. Camping and attractions are utilized the least. Food, gas and lodging tend to use more of the signs. In several areas the supplemental guide signs are close to being full.

#### Mandatory Decisions

Commission is charged to: **Create category definition for new criteria.**

Commission is charged to **define trademarked destination brand for policy purposes.** Amy reviewed the definitions used in this section. She highlighted the proposed language on the summary of work handout.

Question was raised about downtown areas having to register for a trademark. Anicia Richardson reminded the group that there is already a signage category for towns with main street designations.

Anicia Richardson reminded the group that simply having the designation is not the only requirement. The site must meet the other requirements such as attendance and hours of operation.

Issue of unlimited miles – Becky Weber reported that she believes that seeing signage gives the traveler the expectation that the attraction is “close” to exit. Amy Vaughan asked if the mileage to the attraction could be included on the signage. Jim Poturalski reported that attractions currently have mileage listed.

Mike Huber brought up the issue “geographic location.” He wonders what the intent of the proposed change was. The intent was to allow signage for cities and communities. Group concern was that “geographic location” opens up the category to for-profit businesses and gets away from the spirit of the legal change.

Amy Vaughan reviewed the remainder of the proposed definition. Amy asked for comments regarding the other elements.

The group discussed the 20,000 visitors per year attendance requirement. Anicia Richardson explained that the number came from the existing rule and attendance requirements for arenas and convention centers. We want to recognize those communities that are significant contributors to Indiana’s economy. Should this requirement be less to include smaller communities? The goal is to maintain quality so that if signage directs visitors to a community, there are attractions and other features that make the trip worthwhile.

Mike Huber asked if the process by which communities come to their trademark be considered as a qualifier. (research-based, community involvement or historical-evidence)

#### Initial Recommendations for other aspects of the policy

Amy reported that 28 people responded to the survey conducted after the first meeting. In addition, a survey was conducted this summer which raised several of these issues. The group discussed several other topics that we have the opportunity to modify now while the policy is being reviewed.

**Distance** – Recommend adding qualifier if beyond current distance, an exception would be made for facilities generating at least \$1 in gross revenue.

Comments: Could we use and/or (gross revenue - \$1M, number of visitors – 4,000?) as a way to determine successful application if exception is needed. Consider scoring system whereby your total score gives the result, even if attraction/entity doesn’t meet every category. Illinois has a scoring system that can be researched.

**Sign on more than one state road** – Our policy is consistent with other state’s policies. Recommend that consideration will be given to unique situations.

**Hours of operation** – Currently listed as 5 days/week; 6 hours/day; 8 months/year. Recommend that the months of operation be changed to 6 months/year.

Comments: Look at Illinois requirement of having total hours per year rather than per day. Must be expectation that hours are “regular.” Jim Poturalski reminded the group that it is easier to add “open April – October” than hourly restrictions.

**Brewery category** – Want to have policy that mirrors wineries currently. Recommend that facility offer tours to educate the public about beer-making and has a tasting room area.

Comments: Meredith Easley reported that most wineries have the agricultural focus. The key is that the policies have to match as closely as possible and keep the federal guidelines in mind.

**Destination shopping** (outlets, antiques) – still collecting information on this topic regarding how other states handle this.

Comments: group would like to see what other states requirements are.

**Trails** (historic trails, wine trails) – still collecting information on this topic regarding how other states handle this. Should there be a time requirement before signage is allowed?

Comments: group would like to see what other states requirements are.

**Sales tax / gross revenue** – do we need a catch-all category – may be addressed if the hours change or distance requirements are adopted.

**New business** – should there be a one-year clause before they can get signage or should there be some flexibility based on financial investment? Would new business clause apply to trails?

**Other categories** – other categories were reviewed, but based on other states categories, drive-ins, movie theatres, laser-tag, paintball, miniature golf do not qualify for signage policy.

#### Commission Comments

Meredith Easley requested that consideration be given to incorporating tourism signage images at the rest areas. Groups who would benefit could pool their resources to pay for the signage at their closest welcome center / rest area.

#### Public Comments

Mark Webb, Brewers of Indiana Guild, announced that there will be a reception immediately following the meeting today.

Bill Robinson, Indiana Beach, shared signage frustration.

Susan Haller, Indiana Foodways Alliance, clarified that in other states the “geographic area” in the definition discussed earlier usually allows multiple communities or river valleys, etc to work together. Encouraged group to consider broadening the “brewery” category to “beverage and food production category.”

George Ethridge, Golf Shores Fun Center, reiterated that the entertainment industry needs assistance with directional signage for family entertainment.

#### Assignments

Amy Vaughan reported that the staff will come back with revised language and a draft report at the next meeting.

#### Next meeting

The next meeting will be on Thursday, January 10, 2008 at 1:00 p.m. in the 9<sup>th</sup> floor conference room, 1 North Capitol, Indianapolis.